realistic as its genre permits: it is an epic tale. 538

The stories, like many of their Oriental counterparts, are interwoven with recurrent phrases of the "once upon a time" variety (in Hungarian: Hol volt, hol nem volt, volt egyszer....). The tale's hero, for example, after penetrating a strange and exotic region, is suddenly asked: Hol jársz te itt, ahol a madár sem jár? 'How come you are wandering here, where not even birds fly?' When the hero meets the witch, he greets her respectfully and receives the stereotypic answer: Szerencséd, hogy Öreganyádnak szólítottál. 'You were fortunate enough to call me Auntie.' And the wondrous horse, the táltos, asks his master: Hogy menjek, mint a szél, vagy mint a gondolat? 'How fast should I run, like the wind or like human thought?' and so on.

The different types of Hungarian folk tales reveal two concepts of the world. The first, probably the most primitive one, is horizontal: Earth is represented in them as a flat, round object on the edge of which there is either a huge mountain or an immense ocean. The hero has to cross these natural barriers in order to reach the other world. 538 772

538 where his marvelous adventures are to take place.
772

A relatively newer type of world concept is represented by those folk tales in which different worlds are superimposed. In this vertical concept, fashioned after that of the shamans, there is always a tree reaching into the skies (tetejetlen fa) which the hero must climb in order to enter the region of benevolent spirits, fairies, God, St. Peter. The hero on his quest may also descend into an underworld, where evil spirits, devils, witches, dragons, giants and dwarfs live. Besides the tree reaching into the skies, there is another feature of Hungarian tales with shamanistic myths as its source: the kacsalábon forgó vár, the castle that turns on a duck's leg toward the "blessed sun." Traces of animism, personification of natural phenomena (the sun) or objects (a sword) can also be found.

538 The society of the folk tale is relatively simple.
829 There is always a king, depicted as a patriarch administering equal justice to all his subjects. Often he challenges them to perform an almost superhuman task and the successful hero--may he be the poorest--gains the princess's hand and